

REPORT

Human Rights Abuses in Afrin, Syria



Prepared by:
US Mission of the Syrian Democratic Council
800 Maine Ave SW, Washington DC 20024
www.syriandemocraticcouncil.us

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Introduction

Four years have elapsed since Afrin first bore witness to the brutality of the Turkish military and their militia proxy forces. The Turkish invasion, or "Operation Olive Branch," as it is referred to by the Turkish state, began in January 2018. The Turkish-led forces proceeded to conduct a military offensive that was characterized by sheer ruthlessness as by the occupation that has followed in the years since. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) resisted the invading forces for two months, with many fighters that had spent years defending and liberating their region from ISIS becoming martyrs against the vastly superior firepower of the Turkish military, which indiscriminately bombed fighters and civilians with fighter jets, drones, and relentless artillery attacks.

Since March 2018, when Afrin city was occupied by the invading forces, the region's suffering has only expanded. Extensive human rights abuses, which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, have occurred on a consistent basis. Rape, human trafficking, murder,

extortion, theft of property, and large-scale ethnic cleansing and demographic change have all been imposed on Afrin and its population since the occupation began.

These crimes have been committed by a loosely-knit coalition of militias known as the “Syrian National Army”. The coalition contains dozens of militias, many of them with radical and intolerant ideologies that are based in religious and ethno-nationalist extremism. Some of the most prominent militias committing crimes are Jaysh-al-Islam, Ahrar-al-Sham, Ahrar-al-Sharqiya, the Suleiman Shah Brigade, and the Sultan Murad Brigade. Many of these groups frequently fight one another for dominance over different regions in Afrin, essentially competing over their criminal enterprises. The groups are equipped, funded, managed, coordinated, and legitimized by the Turkish government.

1) Ethnic Cleansing and Forced Demographic Change

Since March 18, 2018, more than 300,000 civilians have been forcibly displaced out of the Afrin region of Syria. Most of them now live in poor conditions in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in the neighboring Shehba region, which is frequently shelled by the Turkish-backed forces that occupy neighboring Afrin, Azaz, and al-Bab regions, and also faces siege conditions as a result of the Assad Regime preventing aid reaching the region through Aleppo. This displacement continues as families are forced to leave, whether they are Yazidis who refuse to convert to Islam or Kurds who are threatened with detainment for allegedly working for the Autonomous Administration prior to the occupation.



It's estimated that the proportion of Kurds in Afrin has dropped below [20%](#). They previously made up nearly 97% of the population, and had been a majority in Afrin since the 10th century.

In order to permanently alter the ethnic makeup of the region, Turkey has promoted and supported a policy of resettling ethnic Arabs and Turkmen in the region, often seizing the property previously owned by ethnic Kurds, Yazidis, and local Arabs. Over [400,000](#) people, many of them Syrians displaced from other parts of Syria, have been resettled in the region.

Over 500 Syrian Palestinian families have been resettled in the region as well. Many of them have been resettled in IDP camps that were set up in Afrin with funding from [various Islamist organizations](#) of Qatari and Kuwaiti origin.



2) Theft of Agriculture and Resources

Afrin's most lucrative industry is its olive industry. 20 million olive trees are located in Afrin, previously owned by the local population, now taken by local Turkish-backed armed groups and the Turkish state itself to enrich themselves. The seizure of olives by Turkey and its allied organizations has been well-documented and admitted by the Turkish State.



70% of Afrin's olive groves have been illegally seized by the occupying actors. The remaining groves retained by locals are extensively taxed by Turkish-backed groups as royalties. 333,900

olive trees that were owned by local Kurds have been documented as being either cut down or uprooted by the Turkish-backed authorities to use and trade as firewood, and 80% of Afrin's forests have been cut down by armed groups. This is likewise done as punishment as well. For example, in the region around Bulbul, Ceasefire and YASA [documented](#) a case in which members of the Suqur al-Sham faction cut down at least 1,200 olive trees belonging to a private citizen, accusing him of working with Kurdish factions affiliated to the AANES.



Almost one-third of the allocated hectares of land for agriculture (over 11,000 hectares of land) and 12,000 olive trees have been burned down by armed groups.

3) Abuses and Terrorizing of Women

According to the [Missing Afrin Women Project](#), in 2020 alone 88 women and girls whose identities are known were kidnapped by Turkish-backed militias. Out of the women that were eventually released (35), a ransom had to reportedly be paid for 17 of them to be allowed to return home. These cases involved allegations of torture, including sexual torture, and religious minorities (Yazidis and Alevis) were targeted specifically as well.



This trend continued into 2021, in which many of abuse, imprisonment, and torture were documented against women especially. In a case documented by Defense Post, a Kurdish man named Mahmoud, who himself was imprisoned in Afrin, [spoke](#) about the torture he witnessed.

“For example, there was a girl, 16 years old, from Maraskê village in Afrin, Shera district. Ten men raped her in front of the other inmates and beat her while they did it in front of us. The first time they took her, it was under the order of a Turkish officer. After the inmates revolted, she was let go.”



Another prominent case was brought to light in May, 2021, in which 8 members of the same family were abducted by Turkish-backed “military police” on allegations of forming a militant cell of “Syrian Democratic Forces” and carrying out attacks in the occupied region. Three of the family members that were detained were women. Their names are Zainab Muhammad Ulashi, Media Muhammad Ulashi, and Jihan Muhammad Ulashi. Zainab and Jihan are both mothers to multiple children. According to a testimony of a detainee that was released from the Marata Central Prison, located 5 km west of Afrin, all three women are being held there and tortured. A Telegram news source that is affiliated with some Turkish-backed groups, “Uhtemlet News”, has alleged that Abu Riad Hamadin, Mohamed Hamadin, the Chief of the “military police” in Marate Prison has been sexually harassing and assaulting detained women at the prison.

4) Theft and Occupation of Property

Theft and occupation of property has taken place on a massive scale, in coordination with the changing demographics and ethnic cleansing of Afrin’s original inhabitants. Beyond the previously mentioned theft of Afrin’s olives and olive groves, there is a countless number of cases in which people from Afrin who fled their homes have had their properties stolen, now occupied by one of the Turkish-backed militias or by Syrians that were brought from other parts of Syria to the region. In some cases, despite the known risks, people have attempted to return to their homes and properties in Afrin, only to find them occupied and stolen by foreigners who refuse to return them.



These stolen properties are either sold or occupied for military purposes. The Turkish-backed al-Sham Legion [reportedly](#) threatened the inhabitants of several villages in the Sherawa District of Afrin, including the village of Iskan, in which 3,500 Yazidis lived before the occupation. Today there are only an estimated 200 people remaining in Iskan. Most residents of the region fled due to threats of violence.

Furthermore, a settler occupied the house of the Kurdish citizen “Hassan Qanbar”, who lived in the village Ailka, and sold it to another settler for 1,200 dollars. There was another house in the village Basuta, previously owned by a Kurdish inhabitant, that was sold by a settler for 800 dollars.

5) Turkification of Populace



There has been a systematic attempt to destroy Afrin's culture and implement a policy of "Turkification" in the region to make it more susceptible to Turkish influence. The Turkish language is now taught in all schools in Afrin as a mandatory language, portraits of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk have been displayed, and street signs that were once in Kurdish have been removed and changed to leave no reference to Kurdish language or culture.



Furthermore, Afrin has de facto come under the administration of the Turkish border region of Kilis. The Turkish lira has been [adopted](#) as the primary currency, and residents are being issued Turkish residency cards. Turkish flags now fly above administrative buildings, and the region is de facto being annexed by Turkey.

6) Theft and Destruction of Archeological Heritage

Destruction, looting, and theft has been occurring at historical sites in Afrin, Syria, at an alarming rate. Mafia-style criminal enterprises, run by Turkish-backed militias have been engaging in the excavation of sites, selling antiquities of the region to fund their activities. It is reported that more than a thousand sites have been damaged.

Construction vehicles, designed for heavy earthworks, not delicate archaeological sites, have been in use by Turkish-backed organizations at the site of “Nabi Hori,” about 23 km from Afrin. The site has witnessed large-scale excavation efforts by Turkish-backed organizations in full view of Turkish forces. According to the [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights \(SOHR\)](#), the militias use various heavy vehicles for digging and excavating around the site of an ancient Roman amphitheater near Nabi Hori, searching for ancient artifacts.



Syria is home to some of the oldest continuously inhabited cities and regions in the world, and as such has an estimated [eight to ten thousand](#) archeological and ancient sites. At least one thousand have been targeted and exploited by armed groups. In the Afrin region in particular, the militias that are supported by Turkey under the umbrella of the “Syrian National Army” have largely been allowed to operate unhindered ever since the region was occupied by these factions in March 2018. This has led to mafia-style rule in which criminal enterprises fund these different groups. Illegal excavation is one of these enterprises.

Furthermore, the [Commission of Antiquities](#) in the region of Afrin has documented a series of violations, including the destruction of 35 out of the 92 documented archeological hills in the region. The Marmaron Church, in the ancient village of Brad, which was placed on the antiquities protection list of the region in 2011, is one of the specific sites that were targeted. The

founder of the Maronite Christian community, Saint Maron, is said to have been buried in a special wing of the church that serves as a tomb. The Church has been vandalized and destroyed by the Turkish-backed forces according to the Commission.



UNESCO Heritage Site Near Brad, 15 km outside of Afrin

The Director-General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria, Mahmoud Hammoud, has [stated](#) that Turkey has stolen 16,000 pieces of antiquities from Syria since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, most recently from Afrin, and placed them in Turkish museums.

7) Illegal Extradition of Prisoners

In several cases, arbitrarily detained inhabitants of Afrin have been illegally taken across the border into Turkey. Since Turkish involvement in Syria began, and especially following the invasions of Afrin, Ras al-Ayn, and Tal Abyad, Turkey captured and detained hundreds of Syrian nationals on charges of them working with or for the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria.

The majority of these Syrian nationals are civilians who come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds. Only a small minority were Syrian Democratic Forces fighters. Turkey has justified the extraditing of Syrian citizens to Turkish territory on the grounds that the Syrian state has been unable to contain an alleged “terrorist threat”.

According to a [UN report](#) on the region, “Such transfers provide further indication of collaboration and joint operations between Turkey and the Syrian National Army for the purpose of detention and intelligence gathering,” and also stated that there have been documented cases of Turkish-speaking individuals wearing military fatigues being present during interrogations conducted by the “Syrian National Army” militias in which rape took place.



APPENDIX A



Four Years of Gross Violations in Afrin

[A short report by: Human Rights Organization - Afrin - Syria.](#)

Subject : Four years of gross violations in Afrin.

Date: 30 December, 2021.

Four years of gross human rights violations and depredations on nature, property, culture and history by Turkish occupation in the Syrian region of Afrin

Introduction:

Since Turkish troops and pro-Ankara Arab and Turkmen rebels captured the predominantly Kurdish Afrin enclave in March, 2018, media outlets and human rights groups have documented widespread abuses tantamount to war crimes.

On daily basis, the Kurds, who have now become the minority versus Arab and Turkmen settlers, are subjected to fascist-style violence, and attempts to reshape local pluralist character and empower extremists.

From kidnappings for ransom to armed robberies and torture, remaining Kurdish residents of Afrin say they are suffering a litany of abuses at the hands of Turkish-backed rebels. The spectre of frequent infighting among more than 50 lawless armed groups operating in Afrin casts a shade of doubt and distrust over Turkey's role being the occupying power.

Less than 20 percent of Kurds returned to their homes after the massive exodus in March 2018, only to find them stripped of furniture, electrical appliances and all decoration in large-scale looting.

Most of Afrin's original residents now live in the squalid Shahba camps near Aleppo, their houses commandeered by the families of SNA militiamen brought in by Turkey from Eastern Ghouta, Homs, Idleb, Hama, DeirEzzor, Aleppo countryside... etc.

The remaining locals who have clung on to their properties say they must contend with unrelenting threats of abduction for ransom, extortion, and harrassments.

Under the patronage of Turkish governor of Afrin and Turkish Intelligence Service officers, the commanders of armed groups have each created his own fiefdom in the influence zone granted to him by the Turks, acting like feudal lords, who pay the lion's share of their spoils to Turkish officials to act with impunity and to guarantee staying the longest time possible in power over one's own fiefdom.

Turkey now uses Afrin and other occupied areas in northern Syria as a factory to manufacture mercenaries who have so far been exported to Libya and Azerbaijan in large numbers.

For the last four years more than seventy percent of farms and crops have been appropriated as "spoils of war" and Afrin, for the last three seasons , had its most famed product, olive oil from its vast orchards, plundered and shipped to Turkey to be rebottled and exported as Turkish brand.

Schools now enforce Turkification, gender segregation and islamist extremism. Islamic Sharia and Quran memorization centres and Imami Hatib schools that encourage extremism are being opened everywhere.

Today Turkish flags fly over public buildings and portraits of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ataturk hang in streets, schools, shops and public squares.

Because Turkey and its loyalists have been enforcing Turkification and Arabization, local villages and institutions, streets, public squares and shops have all been rebranded with Turkish names and the Kurdish language is being removed from academic curricula and replaced with the Arabic and Turkish languages.

A widespread hunting for treasures commenced by the outsiders using primitive methods of digging and excavation has destroyed every ancient site and religious shrines as unearthed antiques and artefacts are being looted and transported to Turkey.

Gross violations of human rights and depredations on private and public property during the last four years of Turkish occupation of Afrin:

1) According to our statistics, more than 300 thousand civilians have been forcibly displaced from Afrin since March 18, 2018 and forced displacement is still continuing driven by daily harassments by the Turks and their Syrian SNA militias to ethnically cleanse the area of its native population in order to settle families of pro-Turkey SNA rebels.

2) The proportion of Kurds in Afrin has now dropped to less than 20%, in a flagrant demographic change policy conducted by Turkey.

Approximately 400,000 Arab and Turkmen settlers have been resettled by Turkey in the seized homes of forcibly - displaced Kurds, Yazidis and local Arabs, including the resettlement of more than (500) families of Syrian Palestinians in Afrin.

Besides, due to overcrowding, more than (30) IDP camps and (30) settlements have been established across the region with funds raised by islamist foundations of Kuwait, Qatar and Arab Israelis.

3) Residents of areas under Turkish occupation are now forced to have Turkish identification documents issued for them instead of their Syrian identity documents and Turkish lira is officially circulated instead of the Syrian pound which shows clear Turkish intentions to annex the region to Turkey.

4) So far, more than (8061) civilians have been kidnapped during less than four years of occupation, and the fate of more than a third of them is still unknown.

All those released abductees were only set free in exchange for heavy financial ransoms. Many local Kurds have been abducted and ransomed multiple times since abduction for ransom has become a profitable business for the Turks and their SNA armed proxies.

5) Kurdish women have been specifically targeted by MiT and armed groups. In Afrin alone (84) cases of murder of abducted Kurdish women have been documented, as well as six cases of suicide and (70) cases of sexual assault, not to mention the harassments that women are exposed to on a daily basis in public.

6) Six hundred and fifty - five (655) civilians have been killed, of whom (496) were killed as a result of the Turkish bombing and (90) were killed under torture in detention centres. More than (696) civilians have been documented as severely wounded and disabled by Turkish army and affiliated armed factions, including about (303) children and (213) women.

7) Accidents of landmines and booby-traps: (217) casualties.

8) Following the Turkish occupation, 20 million olive trees have turned into a source of income for the armed groups and their Turkish masters according to locals.

These groups have appropriated seventy percent of olive farms. Besides, they seize a large part of remaining local farmers' olive harvest as royalties and taxes, buying the remaining crop cheaply by clients working for Turkish merchants.

We have documented (333,900) olive trees owned by local Kurds as have cut down and uprooted for trade in firewood and approximately eighty percent of the Afrin forests has totally been cut down by armed groups.

Moreover, nearly one third of the area allocated for agriculture, estimated at more than (11,000 hectares), and 12 thousand olive trees have been burned by armed groups and outsiders who have also seized thousands of homes of forcibly displaced civilians and turned dozens of them into prisons, detention centers and headquarters armed groups.

9) Most archaeological sites listed on the UNESCO list have been destroyed, bulldozed and randomly excavated by Turkish army and Turkey-backed armed groups. For example, Ain Dara temple, Cyrus amphitheatre, Neanderthal Dodari Cave, Saint Maron's tomb and church and dozens of archaeological mounds in search of antiquities and archaeological finds.

According to the statistics of the Directorate of Antiquities of Afrin there were 75 archaeological mounds in Afrin and that at least (59) sites and archaeological mounds and buildings have been vandalized and destroyed, as well as (28) religious shrines that belong to various sects and religions. Besides, many cemeteries have been bulldozed and Afrin's cemetery for the victims of Turkish invasion has even been turned into a livestock market.

10) The armed groups have dismantled the rails of train railway extending from Akbaz Midan in the northern Rajo to Kafer Janna and Qatma in the Sharan subdistrict, selling them to Turkish dealers.

11) Appropriation of olive oil factories:

Commanders of SNA rebels and unknown Turkish officers have directly seized 140 olive oil factories out of 300 presses in the region, as well as 7 factories out of total 15 for pyrene and soap. They have have also put their hands on the remaining olive presses as co-owners in profits under the pretext that they provide protection.

The statistics of violations and transgressions in 2021:

1) Killing of civilians :

Fifty-one civilians (51) , including (14) females and (13) children.

2) Abductions and arrests of civilians :

Seven hundred and sixteen (716) civilians, including (82) women and (25) minors were kidnapped and tortured.

3) Archeological sites:

Seventeen (17) archaeological sites were looted and bulldozed in 2021.

4) Trees and forests:

More than 23,500 olive trees were cut down, as well as tens of thousands of forest and fruit trees were uprooted, burned or cut down for logging and some forests were cleared in order to build settlements there.

5) The demographic change:

Thirty (30) settlements, most notably (Kuwait Al-Rahma settlement, Al-Shamiya village and Basma village) were constructed by Turkish, Qatari and Kuwaiti associations (Al-Bayan Qatari-Turkish Association, Living in Dignity Palestine 48 Association, Kuwaiti Al-Ihsan Charitable Association, etc.

6) Appropriation of homes owned by local Kurds:

In 2021 armed groups seized (160) homes and dozens of shops owned by Kurds, selling (75) of them and dozens of shops to outsiders at cheap prices.

A call of distress to save the native population of Afrin from the yoke of occupation and SNA rebels

We call on all international human rights and humanitarian organizations, led by the United Nations, the Human Rights Organization, UNICEF and UNESCO, to carry out their moral, humanitarian and legal responsibilities regarding the gross violations of human rights that are tantamount to war crimes and other depredations and abuses perpetrated by pro-Turkey rebels in Afrin.

Turkey is the occupying power in Afrin, and, therefore, is responsible for the welfare of the civilian population and maintaining law and order. It cannot evade responsibility by using Syrian armed groups to carry out its dirty work. Without further delay, the international community should pressure Turkey pull out its army and its SNA allies from Afrin and to end violations and transgressions by its intelligence service, and by pro-Turkish armed groups, and to hold perpetrators accountable, and commit to helping Afrin forcibly-displaced residents return to their home towns and villages to rebuild their lives with freedom and dignity.

Human Rights Organization-Afrin-Syria.

30 December, 2021

APPENDIX B

Syria: 584 Persons Arrested in Afrin Over 2021

[Report by Syrians for Truth and Justice, January 2022](#)



A picture taken from the Twitter account for the Sultan Suleiman Shah Division showing their military exercises in November.

Throughout 2021, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) has documented arbitrary arrests every month across all seven districts in the Afrin region of Syria, which is currently occupied and controlled by Turkey and Turkey-backed armed opposition groups. Our detailed monthly reports, beginning in January and published monthly until November, provided the names of individuals, as well as additional identifying information such as age, hometown, place of arrest, and cause of arrest, who our researchers verified as being arrested by armed opposition groups.

The following report lists the total arrests STJ documented across Afrin in 2021, as well as provides detailed information about the individuals arrested in December.

584 People Arrested Throughout 2021

Over the course of 2021, STJ documented the arrest of a total of 584 persons in the Kurdish-majority Syrian region of Afrin. The arrested included 46 women and 16 male and female teenagers.

Tracking the fate of the detainees, STJ recorded the release of only 122 and the death of at least one of the incarcerated persons in detention facilities run by Turkey-backed Syrian armed opposition groups.

In addition to documenting arrests in Afrin, STJ thoroughly analyzed the cases, concluding that perpetrators carried out arrests mostly for political reasons, including cases where victims were arrested for the simple fact that they were Kurds. In other cases, perpetrators were motivated by money, holding detainees to blackmail them and force them into paying ransoms of varying amounts. Other perpetrators were motivated by plans for demographic-change, where they used detentions and the threat of detention to scare indigenous communities into leaving their homes.

While STJ successfully verified the victims' names, surnames, dates, and locations of arrest, STJ failed to obtain information on the current whereabouts of the 461 persons still in custody as of the publication of this report.

The 584 detentions recorded in the report include only those detainees who were arrested and then relocated to detention centers supervised by security apparatuses like the Military Police. STJ identified that the groups making the arrests are chiefly armed opposition groups that maintain control over Afrin's villages and towns.

In other words, the victims reported in this report do not include the detainees held in secret detention sites controlled by armed groups and whose detention was not made public through relocation to local security services' centers. Given this discrepancy, STJ believes that the actual number of detainees is likely greater.

To corroborate information obtained by field researchers, STJ reached out to a reliable source from within the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA). The source confirmed that there are 1,350 detainees across the central prisons and the official detention centers run by the Syrian Interim Government (SIJ) in Afrin. The source added that the detainees are serving various sentences for criminal and non-criminal charges laid against them between 2018 and 2021.

Arrests in December 2021

Field researchers with STJ documented at least 55 arrests, among them five women and a teenager, across the region's seven districts. The arrests were chiefly carried out by armed

groups affiliated with the SNA. STJ obtained verified information demonstrating that only one person was released, while the remaining 54 continue to be unaccounted for.

The lists below are built on information obtained by STJ's network of researchers, as well as the testimonies provided by civil sources, eyewitnesses, and sources from within the SNA, which STJ aggregates into a designated database.

Arrests in Afrin District

In Afrin district, the military factions in control of the area arrested 13 persons, including a woman and a teenager. Several detainees were located to centers operated by the Military Police. All 13 detainees remain unaccounted for.

Muhammad Rashid Kubal, 55, was arrested on 1 December from the Sheikh Ballou village. His fate remains unknown.

Toulin Ma'mou, 30, was arrested on 1 December from Afrin city. Her fate remains unknown.

Jamal Jamil Ma'mou, 35, was arrested on 1 December from Afrin city. His fate remains unknown.

Fadel al-Tabel, 45, was arrested on 2 December from Afrin city. His fate remains unknown.

Omar Muhammad, 45, was arrested on 4 December from Afrin city. His fate remains unknown.

Dilyar Ahmad, 15, was arrested on 6 December from Bassouta village. His fate remains unknown.

Kawa Shamseddin was arrested on 8 December from Afrin city. His fate remains unknown.

Dilyar Batal Batal, 27, was arrested on 21 December from Maratah village. His fate remains unknown.

Heimar Muhammad Qlajj, 27, was arrested on 21 December from Maratah village. His fate remains unknown.

Muhammad Ahmad Ayoubi, 27, was arrested on 21 December from Maratah village. His fate remains unknown.

Ali Muhammad Ibrahim, 26, was arrested on 21 December from Maratah village. His fate remains unknown.

Hassan Ibrahim Khalil was arrested on 28 December from Kawanda village. His fate remains unknown.

Mustafa Nasser Hikmeh, 50, was arrested on 30 December from Tarandat/Turindê village. His fate remains unknown.

Arrests in Rajo District

In Rajo district, military factions arrested eight persons, including two women. Several detainees were relocated to centers operated by the Military Police. All eight detainees remain unaccounted for.

Riyad Adnan Rashid, 25, was arrested on 1 December from Rajo town. His fate remains unknown.

Hussein Ahmad Na'ssan, 39, was arrested on 1 December from Shadya village. His fate remains unknown.

Hajar Muhammad Koulin, 26, was arrested on 2 December from Ba'dina village. His fate remains unknown.

Nawal Anwar Na'ssan, 25, was arrested on 4 December from Rajo town. Her fate remains unknown.

Hussein Sido Khalil, 45, was arrested on 12 December from Mahmadli village. His fate remains unknown.

Rashid Mannan Sido was arrested on 17 December from Kamarsheh village. His fate remains unknown.

Ali Hassan, 50, was arrested on 26 December from Dudiah village. His fate remains unknown.

Silin Hassan, 21, was arrested on 26 December from Dudiah village. Her fate remains unknown.

Arrests in Bulbul District

In Bulbul district, the Military Police arrested four persons, among them a woman. All four remain unaccounted for.

Hayat Subhi, 23, was arrested on 1 December from Ali Karou village. Her fate remains unknown.

Muhammad Nouri Qadmou, 35, was arrested on 2 December from Sahra/Zaara village. His fate remains unknown.

Hannan Bilal, 40, was arrested on 20 December from Bandark village. His fate remains unknown.

Ali Muhammad Khalil, 38, was arrested on 20 December from Bandark village. His fate remains unknown.

Arrests in Maabatli/Mabeta District

In Maabatli/Mabeta district, the Military Police arrested 10 persons. All 10 continue to be unaccounted for.

Ahmad Aziz Alo, 23, was arrested on 1 December from Mīrkān village. His fate remains unknown.

Abdo Hasiko was arrested on 1 December from Mīrkān village. His fate remains unknown.

Walat Haj Ali, 38, was arrested on 1 December from Mīrkān village. His fate remains unknown.

Ruzkar Fawzi Akash was arrested on 3 December from Kakhra village. His fate remains unknown.

Nidal Ahmad was arrested on 12 December from Maabatli village. His fate remains unknown.

Jihad Muhammad Mansour, 45, was arrested on 12 December from Şorbe/Shurba village. His fate remains unknown.

Farid Mustafa Ahmad, 48, was arrested on 12 December from Amara village. His fate remains unknown.

Mustafa Bayram, 35, was arrested on 12 December from Shekhotka/Şêxûtka village. His fate remains unknown.

Muhammad Hassan Hajji was arrested on 26 December from Moubata village. His fate remains unknown.

Abdin Izat Fula was arrested on 29 December from Maabatli village. His fate remains unknown.

Arrests in Sharran District

In Sharran district, the Military Police arrested five persons. Only one was released. The other four remain unaccounted for.

Rashid Hourou, 20, was arrested on 1 December from Dair Sawan/ Dayr Şawwān village. His fate remains unknown.

Mousa Khalil Abdulrahman, 62, was arrested on 1 December from Dair Sawan/ Dayr Şawwān village. His fate remains unknown.

Hussni Muhammad Sheikh Muhammad, 30, was arrested on 2 December from Midankey village. His fate remains unknown.

Furat Zaza, 25, was arrested on 10 December from Alji His fate remains unknown.

Fathi Muhammad Ali was arrested on 22 December from Ma'arkaseh village. He was subsequently released.

Arrests in Jindires District

In Jindires district, several of the military factions operating across the district arrested three persons. All detainees remain unaccounted for.

Farid Ismat Hamou was arrested on 2 December from Ashkan village. His fate remains unknown.

Idris Muhammad Baker was arrested on 2 December from Ashkan village. His fate remains unknown.

Asad Muhammad Ali Haider was arrested on 4 December from Hamam village. His fate remains unknown.

Arrests in Shaykh al-Hadid District

In Shaykh al-Hadid district, the Military Police arrested 12 persons. All detainees remain unaccounted for.

Rouhat Nouri Ebo, 22, was arrested on 2 December from Kourzaleh village. Her fate remains unknown.

Munzer Muhammad Ali was arrested on 8 December from Faftertin village. His fate remains unknown.

Jumaa Hassan Hanou was arrested on 8 December from Faftertin village. His fate remains unknown.

Suleiman Zaki Mustafa was arrested on 9 December from al-Ghazawiya village. His fate remains unknown.

Batal Muhammad Nour Kaifo was arrested on 9 December from al-Ghazawiya village. His fate remains unknown.

Rinas Bahri Kaifo was arrested on 9 December from al-Ghazawiya village. His fate remains unknown.

Jamil Ahmad Brimo, 33, was arrested on 9 December from al-Ghazawiya village. His fate remains unknown.

Zaradasht Abdulaziz Brimo, 33, was arrested on 9 December from al-Ghazawiya village. His fate remains unknown.

Ocalan Khalil Shawti was arrested on 30 December from Faftertin village. His fate remains unknown.

Hussein Khalil Shawti was arrested on 30 December from Faftertin village. His fate remains unknown.

Jasim Muhammad Qasmo was arrested on 30 December from Faftertin village. His fate remains unknown.

Omar Diyab Diyab was arrested on 30 December from Faftertin village. His fate remains unknown.

APPENDIX C

[Report by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#)

“Olive Branch” areas in 2021 | Nearly 1,200 human rights violations...over 50 explosions and factional infightings...nearly 130 fatalities in acts of violence...ongoing demographic change

SOHR calls on the international community to intervene immediately and protect civilians from systematic violations by Turkish-backed factions

Since Turkish forces and their proxy factions captured several areas in north-western Aleppo, namely Afrin canton, after a military operation known as “Olive Branch”, humanitarian crises have been emerging and worsening gradually, with violations, attacks and explosions occur almost daily. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) has monitored and tracked prominent developments and gross violations in these areas in 2021, which can be summarised in the following main points:

Acts of violence leaves scores of fatalities

In 2021, SOHR has documented the death of 129 people in areas under the control of Turkish forces and factions operating under the banner of “Olive Branch” operation room in the north-western countryside of Aleppo. A breakdown of fatalities is as follows:

-66 civilians, including 13 children and 15 women:

26 civilians, including four children and eight women, were killed in bombardment by artillery shells fired from areas controlled by Kurdish and regime forces.

24 civilians, including seven children and five women, were killed in explosions.

Six civilians, including a woman, died under torture in prisons run by Turkish-backed factions.

Four civilians, including two children and a woman, were murdered.

Three men were killed in unknown circumstances.

Two men were killed by the factions.

A young man killed himself because of pressure exerted on him by factions which had threatened to hurt his family.

-61 Turkish-backed militiamen:

22 militiamen, including three commanders, were killed in explosions.

13 militiamen were killed in factional and family fights.

11 militiamen were killed in Russian airstrikes.

10 militiamen were assassinated by unknown gunmen.

Four militiamen were killed in bombardment by artillery shells fired from areas controlled by Kurdish and regime forces.

A militiaman died under torture in Al-Hamza prison.

-Two members of ISIS cells were killed in a security operation by Turkish-backed factions.

Tens of explosions and factional rivalries in light of increasing security chaos

“Olive Branch” areas in Aleppo countryside witnessed 25 explosions in 2021, all caused by detonating IEDs, landmines and booby-trapped vehicles, which killed 46 people: 24 civilians, including seven children, five women, and 22 Turkish-backed militiamen. The explosions also injured nearly 73 people.

The monthly death toll of these explosion is distributed in descending order as follows:

January: 14

September: 14

February: 6

May: 6

June: 6

August: 5

April: 4

March: 2

July: 2

October: 1

December: 1

No explosions were documented in November 2021.

Also, in 2021, 26 tribal and family fights and factional rivalries occurred in “Olive Branch” areas, which left 13 Turkish-backed militiamen dead and 31 other people, including civilians, injured. Here is a descending monthly distribution of these fights:

November: 5

April: 3

September: 3

October: 3

January: 2

March: 2

June: 2

July: 2

August: 2

February: 1

May: 1

No fights or rivalries were documented in December 2021.

1,191 human rights violations and ongoing sabotage of Syria's civilisational heritage

As Turkish-backed factions have been stepping up their daily violations against the people of Afrin canton who have chosen to stay in their areas over displacement, SOHR has documented the arrest and kidnap of over 726 civilians, including 185 women and four children, in 2021. Nearly 477 people were released after paying money/levies in Turkish lira and US dollar, while the rest remained in the factions' custody.

The monthly distribution of the arrests and kidnappings, all documented by SOHR, in a descending order is as follows:

November: 122

August: 118

October: 83

January: 77

March: 64

February: 56

May: 44

June: 41

September: 36

December: 35

April: 28

July: 22

Besides, SOHR has documented over 465 other violations which are distributed as follows:

168 incidents of seizure of houses and shops by members and commanders of Turkish-backed factions in Afrin city and affiliated districts. The seized houses belonged to people who have forced to displace from Afrin canton due to the "Olive Branch" operation.

113 incidents of seizure of farmlands belonging to displaced people from Afrin city and affiliated districts.

78 incidents of selling displaced people's houses which had been seized earlier by Turkish-backed factions by force. The houses were sold at low prices and in US dollar in particular.

106 incidents of imposition of levies on civilians by the factions and local councils in return for allowing them to cultivate their land and harvest crops. The requested levies were shares of the harvest and profits or sums of money paid in US dollar and Turkish lira.

Moreover, the factions sabotaged civilian properties, where they felled tens of thousands of fruit-bearing trees and sold them as fire logs. On the other hand, Turkish-backed factions continued excavation work and digging in archaeological hills, searching for buried artifacts and antiques. In 2021, SOHR sources reported that Turkish-backed factions continued digging and excavation work on "Qah Waqah" hill on the road to Raju town in Afrin countryside. It is worth noting that the hill was excavated and artifacts were found and looted in mid 2019. However, the Turkish-backed factions returned to excavate the archaeological hill again, searching for remaining artifacts thought to be buried there.

In Afrin city, however, "Deir Sawan" hill in Sharran district, registered by the Syrian Antiquities Directorate in 1981 under Resolution No. 244 | A, was dug and excavated by the Ankara-backed factions. According to recently captured photos of the site, digging and systematic destruction of that hill could be obviously seen at Al-Akrobol peak until the slope, where heavy diggers and earth-moving machineries continued digging, searching for antiquities in full view of Turkish forces.

Meanwhile, the hill in the south of Jendires district was excavated and destroyed by Turkish forces stationed over the hill, after turning it into a military based since they captured Afrin canton. Satellite photos showed the continuous digging and sabotage of the that hill by heavy machines for the purpose of expanding the base and treasure looting, as well as destroying the warehouses of the German-Syrian mission, as they completely levelled the whole area after stealing the tools used by the archaeological missions that were searching for monuments.

Since the factions of the Turkey-backed National Army captured Afrin canton in March 2018, the looting of several archaeological sites has occurred throughout Afrin.

Systematic demographic change

As SOHR has been all along warning against demographic change in Afrin city and surrounding districts, the systematic practices and efforts by Turkish forces and their proxy factions in 2021 reflected their intention to change the demography of the canton. In mid-April, the Kuwaiti-backed "Sham Al-Khair Charity" constructed a housing association called "Kuwait Al-Rahma" in a village in Shirawa district in Afrin countryside, under direct supervision by the "Civil Council" in Afrin. The construction of housing continued in a complex that included nearly 300 houses, a mosque, a clinic, a school and a Koranic institute with the aim of housing displaced people from various Syrian areas.

Similarly, in May, the Syrian Observatory reported that a charitable association called "Basma" was working on building a residential village in Shadir village in Sherawa countryside (Jabal Laylon) in

Afrin countryside. The association aimed to construct 12 residential blocks of 144 apartments, in the first phase, for settling families affiliated to pro-Turkey factions, especially “Turkmen” factions.

The village was built with support by the Kuwaiti-backed association of the “White Hands”, and it included three-story-style blocks with each floor containing four apartments, in addition to building a mosque and a health centre. The project also provided supplies of drinking water, electricity, road and sewage networks.

In the first third of 2021, the Turkish forces and their proxy factions started the establishment of seven model villages for settling displaced people from other Syrian provinces. The new villages were built by Turkish organisations, like the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and other Gulf countries. These villages are located in southern Shadirrah village, Sheikh Mohammed Mountain northern Kafr Safrah- Jindires, Ligah area between the two villages of Karmatlaq and Jiqla Tahtani, Shie/Shiekh Al-Hadid near the hospital, and another mountainous site near the village of Hag Hasna- Jindires, and another site near the village of “Khalta”-Shirawa).

Similarly, on August 30, the local council in Afrin city opened a new village dubbed “Kuwait Al-Rahma” with the aim for housing displaced people from various areas across Syria. This development comes as a part of the Turkish government’s efforts to accomplish its demographic change project in Afrin canton through allowing and supporting civil organisations and bodies to structure residential units in the towns and villages whose indigenous residents were displaced, after their houses had been destroyed by the “Olive Branch” Operation which took place in the villages and towns of Afrin.

The recently-established village, “Kuwait Al-Rahma”, was located between Qibar and Al-Khalidiyyah villages in Shirawa district in Afrin countryside, while the land where the residential units were established belonged to Yazidi civilians. The village, which was established by a Kuwaiti-Palestinian association known as “Sham Al-Khair” with the participation of some Turkish organisations operating in north Syria region, also accommodated nearly 380 residential units, a mosque, a school, a clinic, a Koranic institute and a shopping mall.

Also, on October 6, the “White Hands Charity”, with co-operation with the Palestinian organisation “Live with Dignity”, opened “Basma” village near Dayrah village in Shirawa district in Afrin countryside. The new village was funded by several associations and charities, including the Kuwaiti Sheikh Abdullah Al Nouri Charity Society, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs of Kuwait, the International Islamic Charity Organisation, the Qatari charity society of “Rohamaa Baynahom”, the Kuwaiti Zakat House, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, the Charity Committee of Al-Eslah Society, the Kuwaiti Al-Najat Charity and the Kuwaiti Campaign for Sham Victory and Support. The new village includes eight residential blocks with 96 45-square-meter apartments, and other services and facilities, including a mosque, a school, a medical centre and headquarters of the village’s administration.

It seems that violations in “Olive Branch” areas will not stop as long as Turkish forces and their proxies keep breaching all international laws and charters, while no party or international or regional player is exhibiting any willingness to put an end to these “grave” violations, despite SOHR repeated warnings about the dreadful humanitarian situation in the region.

The Syrian Observatory would like to point out that all information and figures mentioned in this report have been documented and updated until the date of publication.